

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BONN 14295 01 OF 05 042206Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 BONN 14295

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, GW
SUBJECT: QUO VADIS, FDP?

REF: (A) BONN 10216 DTG 051457Z JUN 78
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BEGIN SUMMARY: THE DRAMATIC FAILURE OF THE FDP IN THE
JUNE 4 STATE ELECTIONS RAISES BASIC QUESTIONS ABOUT THE
PARTY'S FUTURE, IN TERMS OF ITS INTERNAL DYNAMICS AND OF
OBJECTIVE TRENDS IN THE FRG POLITICAL SYSTEM. THIS
MESSAGE ATTEMPTS TO ANALYZE THE FDP'S PREDICAMENT IN
BOTH CONTEXTS, WITH A DISCUSSION OF THE SINGULAR
IMPORTANCE OF THE OCTOBER ELECTIONS IN HESSE AND
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PAGE 02 BONN 14295 01 OF 05 042206Z

BAVARIA. WE CONCLUDE THAT THE FDP WILL REMAIN A FACTOR
IN FRG POLITICS FOR AT LEAST THE MID-TERM--I.E., THROUGH
THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN 1980--AND PROBABLY BEYOND.
NEVERTHELESS, THERE ARE SIGNS THAT, IN THE EVOLVING FRG
ELECTORAL SYSTEM, THERE IS LESS AND LESS ROOM FOR THE
FDP. END SUMMARY.

INTRODUCTION

1. SINCE THE FOUNDING OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY, THE FDP HAS BEEN A POLITICAL FORCE AT THE NATIONAL AND THE STATE (LAND) LEVEL. THE PARTY HAS HAD A CAUCUS IN EVERY BUNDESTAG. IN EIGHT NATIONAL ELECTIONS, ITS POPULAR STRENGTH (MEASURED ON THE SECOND BALLOT) HAS RANGED FROM A HIGH 12.8 PERCENT (1961) TO A LOW 5.8 PERCENT (1969). ON ALL BUT SEVEN OCCASIONS (INCLUDING TWICE ON JUNE 4, 1978), THE FDP HAS SURMOUNTED THE FIVE-PERCENT BARRIER IN EVERY STATE ELECTION. IN BONN AND ON THE LAND AND LOCAL LEVELS, THE FDP HAS HAD REMARKABLE SUCCESS IN FORMING GOVERNMENTS WITH THE SPD AND THE CDU. AS A PARTY WHICH CAN NEVER GOVERN ALONE, AND HENCE THREATENS NO ONE, THE FDP HAS A NATURAL ATTRACTION TO LARGER PARTNERS IN NEED OF AN ALLY.

2. THE PRESENT FDP SITUATION IS PARTLY THE RESULT OF CHANGES WHICH HAVE OCCURRED SINCE THE FORMING OF THE SOCIAL-LIBERAL COALITION IN 1969. FDP MEMBERSHIP IS NO LONGER DOMINATED BY TRADITIONAL LIBERALS, WHO STILL FORM AN IMPORTANT WING OF THE PARTY (E.G., GRAF LAMBSDORFF); IT NOW COVERS A BROADER SPECTRUM WHICH INCLUDES LEFT-OF-CENTER ORIENTATION (E.G., GERHARD BAUM).

3. DURING 1969-1976, THE FDP LOST 30,000 SUPPORTERS,
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PAGE 03 BONN 14295 01 OF 05 042206Z

SOME OF WHOM MOVED OVER TO THE CDU; IT PICKED UP 50,000 NEW ONES. THIS IS A MASSIVE FACELIFTING FOR A PARTY WHOSE TOTAL MEMBERSHIP IS ONLY 80,000. IN THE MAIN, THE NEW MEMBERS ARE PROGRESSIVE, LEFT-LEANING, AND LESS COMMITTED TO THE FDP THAN THEIR PREDECESSORS. MANY ARE IN FACT INDEPENDENTS WHO, FOR THE TIME BEING, PITCH THEIR TENT IN THE FDP CAMP. THEY ARE THUS PREPARED TO DESERT FDP RANKS AND VOTE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND OTHER PROTEST GROUPS THAT HAVE RECENTLY EMERGED, E.G., MANY RECRUITS FOR THE GREEN ACTION FUTURE (GAZ) MOVEMENT COME FROM FDP RANKS. FOR THIS REASON, THE EMERGING GREEN AND COLORFUL LISTS ARE A GENUINE THREAT TO THE FDP. THEY SIPHON OFF MEMBERS WHOSE ALLEGIANCE IS NEVER FIRM, AND THUS MAKE THE FDP MORE VULNERABLE TO THE FIVE-PERCENT CLAUSE WHICH HAS ALWAYS THREATENED IT.

4. IN REVIEWING FDP PERFORMANCE, WE NOTE THAT NATIONAL AND STATE ELECTIONS, WHILE RELATED, OFTEN TURN ON DIFFERENT FACTORS. THE ISSUES WHICH CAUSE A PARTY TO DO WELL IN A LAND CONTEST MAY NOT DETERMINE ITS SUCCESS IN A BUNDESTAG ELECTION. THE FDP'S DISPARATE PERFORMANCE ON BOTH LEVELS ILLUSTRATES THIS POINT. NATIONALLY, THE PARTY

HAS RECOVERED SOMEWHAT FROM ITS HISTORIC LOW IN
1969 (5.8 PERCENT). IN THE LAST TWO BUNDESTAG ELECTIONS,
IT WON 8.5 PERCENT (1972) AND 7.9 PERCENT (1976), STILL
BELOW ITS PRE-1969 AVERAGE OF ABOUT 10 PERCENT. PARA-

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PAGE 01 BONN 14295 02 OF 05 042205Z
ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 05 BONN 14295

DOXICALLY, THE FDP HAS HAD A DOWNWARD TREND IN MANY
LAENDER SINCE 1969, MOST RECENTLY WITH ITS JUNE 4
FAILURES IN HAMBURG AND LOWER SAXONY. SUCH A TREND IS BY
NO MEANS IRREVERSIBLE. TO THE CONTRARY, THE FDP HAS
ALWAYS RECOUPED WHEN IT HAS FALLEN BELOW THE FIVE-PERCENT
LEVEL--BAVARIA IN 1966, BERLIN IN 1958, LOWER SAXONY IN
1970, THE SAARLAND IN 1970, AND SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN IN
1971--AND REENTERED THE LANDTAG IN THE NEXT ELECTION.

FACTORS OF STRENGTH

5. SEVERAL CONSIDERATIONS ARGUE THAT THE FDP WILL REMAIN
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PAGE 02 BONN 14295 02 OF 05 042205Z

ON THE FRG POLITICAL SCENE FOR SOME TIME.

A. MANY FRG VOTERS HAVE BEEN, AND CONTINUE TO BE, ATTRACTED BY THE PARTY'S ROLE AS A BRAKE AND INNOVATOR VIS-A-VIS THE MAJOR PARTIES. MANY VOTERS, FOR REASONS OF PRESTIGE OR HABIT OR BOTH, STILL PREFER NOT TO VOTE FOR A LARGE PARTY. HISTORICALLY, THE FDP HAS OFTEN GIVEN THE CHANCELLOR, WHETHER CDU OR SPD, A RATIONALE FOR HOLDING BACK THE WILDER MEN IN HIS OWN PARTY.

B. SECOND, THE FDP HAS DEFINED AND PROJECTED ITS IMAGE AS A PARTY OF EFFECTIVE MANAGERS, OFTEN OUTSPOKEN AND SOMETIMES COLORFUL PERSONALITIES. THOUGH THE FDP TALKS MUCH OF ITS "HISTORIC FREIBURG THESES" (1971) AND ITS ROLE AS A DEFENDER AND IMPLEMENTER OF LIBERAL PRINCIPLES, IN FACT MOST PEOPLE THINK OF THE PARTY IN TERMS OF ITS LEADERS. FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE RECENT DISCUSSION OF THE JULY 28 TAX PACKAGE, THE FDP WON MUCH CREDIT DUE TO THE HIGHLY VISIBLE ROLE OF LAMBSDORFF AND, TO A LESSER DEGREE, GENSCHER.

C. THIRD, AS A COALITION MEMBER, THE FDP ALWAYS HAS POWER FAR BEYOND ITS NUMERICAL STRENGTH. THIS GIVES FDP VOTERS A SENSE OF HAVING MORE INFLUENCE WITH THEIR VOTE. IT ALSO ATTRACTS MANY ABLE PERSONS INTO A PARTY WHICH, BECAUSE IT IS SMALL BUT IMPORTANT, OFFERS A MORE RAPID RISE TO THE TOP. THE METEORIC CAREERS OF GENSCHER, LAMBSDORFF, AND BAUM ARE GOOD EXAMPLES.

D. CURRENTLY, THE SPD IS THE NATURAL PARTNER FOR THE FDP. TO SUCCEED IN ITS POSTURE AS A BRAKE AND AN ALTERNATIVE, THE FDP MUST VISIBLY BE INDEPENDENT FROM, AND INFLUENCE, ITS PARTNER. THIS IS AN EASIER TASK
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PAGE 03 BONN 14295 02 OF 05 042205Z

VIS-A-VIS THE SPD THAN THE CDU/CSU, WITH WHICH THE FDP SHARES MANY IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONS. THIS TASK IS FURTHER EASED BY THE LONG-TERM EFFORT OF CHANCELLOR SCHMIDT, SENSING THE NATIONAL MOOD, TO MOVE THE SPD TO THE RIGHT. THE FDP, AS COALITION PARTNER, GIVES SCHMIDT AN EXTRA REASON TO JUSTIFY THIS SHIFT. IN TURN, SCHMIDT SHOWS GREAT TOLERANCE FOR MANY FDP POSITIONS.

FACTORS OF WEAKNESS

6. THE KEY QUESTIONS FOR FDP LEADERS ARE WHY THEIR PARTY DID SO BADLY ON JUNE 4, AND WHETHER THAT TREND CAN BE REVERSED.

A. FDP INTERNAL DYNAMICS SUGGEST THAT THE PARTY HAS FAILED TO PROJECT A CLEAR IMAGE. A STRONG WHIFF OF OPPORTUNISM HAS ALWAYS CLUNG TO THE FDP, AND PARTLY EXPLAINS THE JUNE 4 DEBACLE. IN HAMBURG AND LOWER SAXONY, THE FDP HAD TO CAMPAIGN IN ADJACENT STATES, OFTEN USING THE SAME MEDIA, IN DEFENSE OF ITS COALITION WITH DIFFERENT PARTNERS. THE FDP'S INDEPENDENT-MINDED MEMBERS ALSO SHOWED A STRONG AFFINITY TO THE NEW, PROTEST GROUPS. THE PARTY HAS A MISERABLE YOUTH WING (THE SO-CALLED YOUNG DEMOCRATS) WHO SCARE VOTERS AWAY. FINALLY, THE FDP HAS TOO OFTEN TRUMPETED INTERNAL REFORMS WHICH FAILED, IN THE END, TO CHANGE ANYTHING.

B. BEYOND THESE POINTS, THERE MAY BE A LONG-TERM DRIFT TOWARD A TWO-PARTY SYSTEM IN THE FRG. THE IDEOLOGICAL GAP BETWEEN THE TWO LARGE MASS PARTIES (VOLKSPARTEIEN), THE SPD AND THE CDU/CSU, HAS CLEARLY DECREASED IN RECENT YEARS. IN OBJECTIVE TERMS, THE NEED FOR AN FDP CORRECTIVE HAS THEREBY DECLINED. SIMILAR TO THE SITUATION IN THE U.S., MOST FRG VOTERS APPEAR COMFORTABLE WITH A TWO-PARTY SYSTEM. IN A SENSE, THE FDP IS THE LAST

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PAGE 04 BONN 14295 02 OF 05 042205Z

RELIC FROM THE ERA OF MANY SMALL PARTIES IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC. SINCE THE END OF THE

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PAGE 01 BONN 14295 03 OF 05 042206Z

ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 05 BONN 14295

THIRD LEGISLATIVE PERIOD (1961), THERE HAVE BEEN ONLY
FOUR PARTIES ON THE NATIONAL STAGE: SPD, CDU, CSU, AND
FDP.

C. AN ADDITIONAL PROBLEM IS THE RECENT PROLIFERATION
OF PROTEST GROUPS. THEY LIE ALMOST ENTIRELY IN THAT
PART OF THE FRG POLITICAL SPECTRUM WHERE THE FDP NOW
COMPETES FOR VOTES. THEY ALSO REINFORCE THE TREND
TOWARD A TWO-PARTY SYSTEM BY MAKING IT MORE DIFFICULT
FOR ANY THIRD PARTY TO CROSS THE FIVE-PERCENT BARRIER.

D. IT MAY ALSO BE THAT, IN THE 1970'S AND BEYOND,
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PAGE 02 BONN 14295 03 OF 05 042206Z

STRONG PERSONALITIES ARE TOO WEAK A REED ON WHICH TO
BUILD AND SUSTAIN A SMALL PARTY. THE LARGE MASS
PARTIES ALSO HAVE ABLE LEADERS, PLUS A PROGRAM WHICH IS
MORE CLEARLY DEFINED--OR PERCEIVED.

E. FINALLY, THE FDP'S DOWNWARD DRIFT IN MANY LAENDER
(REF B), AND THE MOOD OF DEPRESSION WHICH HAS SPREAD
SINCE JUNE 4, MAY RESULT IN A SELF-FULFILLING SENSE OF
DOOM. THE FDP ADMITS THAT ITS RATE OF LOSSES (8500) IN

1975 AND 1976 WAS LARGER THAN IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE
SOCIAL-LIBERAL COALITION. THE DANGER IS THAT THIS
TREND MAY CONTINUE.

SOLUTIONS

7. THE FDP UNDERSTANDS ITS PREDICAMENT BUT HAS FEW ANSWERS. ITS CHOICES LIE SOMEWHERE BETWEEN GREATER STRESS ON IDEOLOGY -- E.G., A NEW PACKAGING OF THE FREIBURG OR KIEL THESES -- AND A NEW CAST OF LEADERS. WITHIN THE PARTY, THERE ARE SHARP DIFFERENCES ON THESE POINTS.

A. ONE FDP WING BELIEVES THAT SALVATION LIES IN IDEOLOGY, THAT THE PARTY CAN CAPTURE NEW VOTERS WITH A STRONGER STATEMENT ON WHERE IT STANDS. THIS GROUP, WHICH INCLUDES FDP BUSINESS MANAGER (AND GENSCHER-ALLY) VERHEUGEN, RECENTLY ASKED CARL FRIEDRICH VON WEIZSAECKER, BROTHER OF A PROMINENT CDU LEADER (RICHARD), TO CHAIR A COMMISSION TO DRAFT A NEW FDP PROGRAM. VON WEIZSAECKER IS STILL WEIGHING THAT OFFER.
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PAGE 03 BONN 14295 03 OF 05 042206Z

B. AT THE OTHER POLE IS THE MANAGEMENT-ORIENTED FDP WING, THE LAMBSDORFFS WHO CARE LITTLE FOR NEW CREEDS BUT MUCH FOR SOLVING PROBLEMS AND HOLDING POWER.

8. RELATIONS BETWEEN THESE TWO CAMPS ARE NATURALLY TENSE. FOR THE MOMENT, GENSCHER IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN HOLD THEM TOGETHER. HOWEVER, HIS POSITION IS VULNERABLE AND HIS HEALTH IN QUESTION. ALREADY UNDER FIRE FOR THE JUNE 4 TRAUMAS, GENSCHER FACES A CRITICAL TEST IN THE OCTOBER VOTES IN HESSE AND BAVARIA.

9. IN HIS PRIME, GENSCHER WAS THE DOMINANT FDP FIGURE: A SAVVY ADMINISTRATOR, A GOOD SPEAKER, A MARVEL OF PHYSICAL AND POLITICAL ENERGY. THAT ERA IS COMING TO A CLOSE, AS ALL WHO HAVE SEEN GENSCHER SINCE HIS CONVALESCENCE LAST FALL CAN ATTEST. THOUGH SOME SPEAK OF A LAMBSDORFF SUCCESSION, THAT PROSPECT STRIKES US AS UNLIKELY. THE GRAF'S SUPPORT LIES MAINLY IN THE FDP RIGHT WING; HE HAS LITTLE INTEREST IN PRO-GRAMMATIC EFFORT; AND HE LACKS THE FRESHNESS OF APPROACH THAT A NEW FDP CHAIRMAN WOULD NEED.

10. THIS SUGGESTS THE POSSIBILITY, WHICH MUST BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY, THAT WALTER SCHEEL, IF HIS TENURE AS PRESIDENT ENDS NEXT MAY, MIGHT SEEK A POLITICAL COMEBACK IN THE FDP. SCHEEL HAS KEPT HIS CONTACTS IN THE FDP, AND HE OBVIOUSLY ENJOYS BROAD RESPECT IN ALL WINGS. HOWEVER, HE WOULD HAVE TO OVERCOME SUBSTANTIAL POPULAR RESISTANCE TO THE IDEA OF A FORMER PRESIDENT'S REENTERING PARTISAN

POLITICS. SUCH A STEP WOULD BE UNPRECEDENTED IN FRG HISTORY, THOUGH NOT INCONCEIVABLE GIVEN THE FDP'S PREDICAMENT. IF GENSCHER'S HEALTH COLLAPSES, AND IN THE ABSENCE OF A SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE, THE FDP COULD TURN TO SCHEEL AGAIN.

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PAGE 04 BONN 14295 03 OF 05 042206Z

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 BONN 14295 04 OF 05 042209Z

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 04 OF 05 BONN 14295

11. WERE THE FDP TO SHARPEN ITS IDEOLOGICAL PROFILE, IT WOULD ENHANCE THE RISK OF CLASHES WITH ITS SPD PARTNER -- A CHOICE WHICH THE PARTY MAY MAKE IF IT

CANNOT REVERSE ITS FORTUNES IN OCTOBER. SUCH AN IDEOLOGICAL SHARPENING WOULD, HOWEVER, SEEM MORE LIKELY IF THE FDP WERE AT THE SAME TIME TO CHANGE ITS LEADERSHIP OR MOVE TOWARD A SWITCH IN COALITION PARTNERS.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HESSE (AND BAVARIA)

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PAGE 02 BONN 14295 04 OF 05 042209Z

12. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HESSIAN STATE ELECTION ON OCTOBER 8 LIES LARGELY IN THE EFFECT THAT A WEAK FDP SHOWING WOULD HAVE ON FRG POLITICS. AN FDP FAILURE TO WIN FIVE PERCENT WOULD PROBABLY MEAN THAT THE CDU WOULD GAIN CONTROL OF THE HESSIAN LAND GOVERNMENT. CDU CONTROL IN HESSE WOULD GIVE THE UNION A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY IN THE BUNDESRAT (THE UPPER HOUSE OF THE FEDERAL PARLIAMENT), AND THEREBY THE POWER TO BLOCK ALL LEGISLATION PASSED BY THE SPD/FDP-CONTROLLED BUNDESTAG (SEE BELOW). FOLLOWING ITS JUNE 4 MISFORTUNES IN HAMBURG AND LOWER SAXONY, AN FDP FAILURE IN HESSE WOULD ALSO CAUSE NEW, SERIOUS RIFTS IN THE PARTY AND FURTHER WEAKEN ITS ABILITY TO FUNCTION AS A NATIONAL PARTNER IN THE SCHMIDT COALITION. (A FAILURE IN BAVARIA, WHATEVER HAPPENS IN HESSE, ALSO HOLDS DANGER FOR THE FDP. SINCE 1954 THE PARTY HAS NEVER RECEIVED MORE THAN SIX PERCENT IN ANY BAVARIAN ELECTION.)

13. WHILE THE SPD IN THE 1974 HESSIAN ELECTION GAINED FEWER VOTES (43.2 PERCENT) THAN THE CDU (47.3 PERCENT), IT WAS ABLE TO FORM A COALITION WITH THE FDP (7.6 PERCENT). ON OCTOBER 8, THE CDU HAS A GOOD CHANCE OF WINNING ONCE AGAIN A PLURALITY IN HESSE. IF IT DOES, AND IF THE FDP WINS LESS THAN FIVE PERCENT, THE CDU WOULD HAVE AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY AND THUS FORM THE NEW GOVERNMENT. MINISTER PRESIDENT BOERNER (SPD) IS ACUTELY AWARE OF THIS DANGER. HE HAS CALLED ON THE PARTY FAITHFUL TO VOTE ONLY FOR THE SPD--I.E., NOT TO "LEND" ANY VOTES TO THE FDP--IN CONTRAST TO EARLIER ELECTIONS IN WHICH THE SPD SOMETIMES HELPED ITS JUNIOR PARTNER.

14. AN FDP DEMISE IN HESSE LEADING TO A CDU GOVERNMENT THERE WOULD HAVE MAJOR RAMIFICATIONS ON THE NATIONAL
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PAGE 03 BONN 14295 04 OF 05 042209Z

LEVEL. IT WOULD, AS NOTED, GIVE THE CDU/CSU LAENDER A

TWO-THIRDS CONTROL OF THE BUNDESRAT. UNDER THE FRG CONSTITUTION, THE UNION WOULD EFFECTIVELY BE ABLE TO VETO ALL LEGISLATION PASSED BY THE SPD/FDP MAJORITY IN THE BUNDESTAG. THIS PROSPECT WOULD FORCE THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT TO HEED CAREFULLY CDU/CSU OBJECTIONS TO GOVERNMENT BILLS, IN EFFECT RECREATING--BUT VERY RELUCTANTLY--A GRAND COALITION. WHILE CDU POLITICIANS DENY AN INTENT TO MAKE EXCESSIVE USE OF THE BUNDESRAT VETO--A DENIAL MADE TO DEFUSE SPD CHARGES OF CDU/CSU OBSTRUCTIONISM--THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT A TWO-THIRDS UNION CONTROL IN THE BUNDESRAT WOULD HEAVILY BURDEN THE TASK OF LEGISLATING. THE THREAT TO VETO WOULD SLOW THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS BY REQUIRING CONSTANT CONSULTATION ON CONTROVERSIAL MATTERS.

15. CONCEIVABLY, THIS SITUATION MIGHT EVEN CAUSE SCHMIDT TO CONSIDER SEEKING A PREMATURE DISSOLUTION OF THE BUNDESTAG AND EARLY ELECTIONS, A COMPLICATED PROCEDURE USED ONLY ONCE BEFORE, IN 1972, BY THEN-CHANCELLOR

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PAGE 01 BONN 14295 05 OF 05 042210Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 05 OF 05 BONN 14295

BRANDT. HOWEVER, THE ODDS DO NOT FAVOR THIS COURSE. IT WOULD (AS IN 1972) REQUIRE THE TACIT BACKING OF THE CDU/CSU, AND THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT THE UNION WOULD COOPERATE. ALSO, THE SPD HOPES FOR A VICTORY IN THE 1979 ELECTIONS IN SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN WHICH WOULD WEAKEN THE UNION'S PRESENT AND PROSPECTIVE MAJORITY IN THE BUNDESRAT. SCHMIDT MIGHT THUS PREFER TO LIMP ALONG WITH A BAD SITUATION RATHER THAN TO SEEK EARLY ELECTIONS.

16. THE LAST RAMIFICATION OF AN FDP COLLAPSE IN HESSE LIES WITHIN THE FDP ITSELF AND WITHIN THE SOCIAL-LIBERAL COALITION. THE FDP, AS WE NOTED ABOVE, HAS CHANGED IN
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BONN 14295 05 OF 05 042210Z

THE PAST 10 YEARS FROM A PARTY WITH A HIGHLY SPECIFIC VOTER APPEAL TO A PARTY WITH MANY WIDE-RANGING, DIVERSIFIED ELEMENTS. THE FDP SPECTRUM RANGES FURTHER LEFT THAN THE SPD IN SOME STATES; IT RANGES TO THE MIDDLE OF THE CDU/CSU IN OTHERS. THIS DIVERSIFICATION LEADS TO A CENTRIFUGAL FORCE WHICH IS ACCENTUATED BY ELECTORAL DISASTER. THE LOSS OF HESSE COULD BRING ABOUT A NEW SHAKEUP IN THE FDP, AND CAUSE SOME MEMBERS TO DESERT TO ONE OF THE LARGER PARTIES.

17. EVEN IF THE FDP COULD CHECK THIS TENDENCY, IT WOULD NEED TO SPEND GREATER AMOUNTS OF TIME ON ITS INTERNAL PROBLEMS, THEREBY WEAKENING ITS ABILITY TO FUNCTION AS A MEMBER OF THE SCHMIDT COALITION. AS TOLERANT AS SCHMIDT HAS BEEN OF FDP NEEDS, IN VIEW OF HIS OWN REQUIREMENTS AND THOSE OF HIS COALITION, THERE IS A LIMIT BEYOND WHICH HE AND HIS PARTY MAY NOT TOLERATE CODDLING OF A WEAKENED FDP.

CONCLUSION

18. IF THE FDP IS VOTED OUT OF THE HESSIAN AND BAVARIAN PARLIAMENTS IN OCTOBER -- THEREBY RUNNING ITS CHAIN OF DISASTERS TO FOUR IN A ROW -- THE SITUATION WILL BE SERIOUS BUT STILL NOT HOPELESS. THE PARTY WOULD IN ALL LIKELIHOOD REMAIN IN THE NATIONAL COALITION AND LOOK FOR AN UPTURN IN 1979. WEIGHING ALL FACTORS OF STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS, AND TAKING ACCOUNT OF DEFECTIONS AND OTHER STRAINS WHICH THE FDP'S PRESENT SITUATION ENTAILS, WE CONCLUDE THAT THE FDP WILL REMAIN ON THE FRG POLITICAL SCENE FOR THE MID-TERM, CERTAINLY THROUGH THE 1980 BUNDESTAG ELECTIONS, AND POSSIBLY LONGER. PERSONNEL

OR IDEOLOGICAL SHAKEUPS ARE LIKELY IF PARTY FORTUNES
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BONN 14295 05 OF 05 042210Z

DO NOT IMPROVE IN OCTOBER. HOWEVER, THE ULTIMATE
DANGER FOR THE FDP IS THAT IT MAY BE SQUEEZED OUT OF
THE EVOLVING FRG ELECTORAL SYSTEM.
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